

# Power to the Learner: an Approach towards Pedagogically-Oriented Bilingual Dictionaries

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## Introduction

*Change is not something that people tend to associate with dictionaries. [...] The heavy cost of dictionary production, and the penalty to be paid for errors of judgement, have made it almost impossible for any radically new dictionary to come into being. (Atkins 1996)*

A decade ago, Sue Atkins' rather pessimistic sounding statement was not an isolated one – on the contrary. Numerous meta-lexicographers expressed their doubts as to the possibility of bringing really innovative approaches into the vast field of dictionary making, such as Zöfgen, who wrote

*It is therefore all the more surprising that in a market saturated with language learning material a bilingual dictionary developed along the lines of pedagogical lexicography and especially designed for the foreign learner is [...] still not available. (Zöfgen 1995)*

Looking back at the development in the German market over the past decades, one is tempted to agree with Atkins' and Zöfgen's observations. Of course there were some "new" dictionaries – published by well-known publishers – with titles like *Schulwörterbuch* or *Schülerwörterbuch* [school dictionary]; in fact, these turned out to be more or less conventional dictionaries with some "add-ons" such as warning-signs against the use of false friends, an additional appendix, and so on.

In a way, Atkins was right when she talked about the financial risks that prevented publishers for a long time from pursuing radically new ways of presenting languages in bilingual dictionaries. Traditionally accepted principles of organizing the macro – as well as micro – structure were adhered to. Therefore, competitors had little more to show off with than the number of entries, the number of translations and some catchy neologisms. Quantity seemed to dominate quality.

Also, on the academic level, in-depth reflections and discussions on the topic of bilingual learner-oriented lexicography did not – to my knowledge – start until the early nineteen eighties.

As regards learner's dictionaries,

reflections and discussions by lexicographers as well as meta-lexicographers were of course influenced by the work and results already accomplished worldwide. And yet again, the main interest did not focus on bilingual dictionaries but on monolingual ones – the following definition speaks for itself:

*A learner's dictionary is a synchronic monolingual dictionary intended to meet the demands of the foreign learner. (Herbst 1995)*

Along with the prevailing didactic approach of teaching a foreign language via the foreign language, the main course of discussion followed – for quite a long time – the monolingual path rather than the bilingual one.

Thanks to institutions such as EURALEX, the relevance of bilingual dictionaries for foreign language acquisition was re-discovered and is now widely recognized, and lexicographers worldwide (either in the function of dictionary-makers working for a publisher or as meta-lexicographers working at a university) have taken cognizance of the need for bilingual learner's dictionaries that meet the requirements of the users.

Or to put it differently: discussions and reflections on monolingual English learner's dictionaries over the past few decades have significantly contributed to the high quality represented in monolingual dictionaries for advanced learners of English, which set international standards for the genre of monolingual learner's dictionaries. In Germany it was Langenscheidt publishing house who were thus determined to maintain the high standard set up by these and other titles when they decided to produce the *Großwörterbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache*.

## Towards the Bilingual Learner's Dictionary

In the 1990s, renowned international dictionary publishers added a new facet to the monolithic block of monolingual learner's dictionaries: the *semi-bilingual learner's dictionary*. OUP/Cornelsen published *Oxford Grundwörterbuch* [Basic Dictionary] *English-German / Deutsch-Englisch* and Langenscheidt introduced *Two in One Dictionary of English*, along

lines set outside Germany by the *Password* series of Kernerman Semi-Bilingual Dictionaries.

### Langenscheidt Power Dictionary Englisch – Deutsch / Deutsch – Englisch

In 1993 a working-group was established at Langenscheidt which was to discuss and design ways of improving one of its best-selling books, the well-known *Schulwörterbuch*, hence the provisional working-title *Didaktisiertes Schulwörterbuch*, or DSW for short. On the team were not only lexicographers, but also experienced teachers and pedagogical experts from universities and teacher-training seminars.

The target-group was identified as German-speaking learners from beginner to intermediate level. Although we were primarily aiming at school students, we realized from the start that the concept should also work for ELT in adult education.

During several brain-storming weekends it has become clear that the mere incorporation of new features would get us nowhere. It was the structure as such, the lexicographic identity, which had to be changed. The idea began to get rid of old and convenient lexicographical conventions if we were to achieve anything. Slogans such as *Less is More!*, *Kill the Swung Dash!*, *No more v/recip and v/impers!*, *Phonetics for Translations!* and so on covered pinboards and flipcharts. At the end we had a concept to start with, a concept that of course was changed and adapted in the course of compilation, which again was accompanied by permanent discussions in the team. It was a concept which – and we were absolutely convinced about that – would lead us to a dictionary unprecedented in the history of German lexicography.

#### The main characteristics

- We followed the topos of *less is more*, which means we decided on a lean dictionary concept – a reduction in the number of headwords in favour of an extended, user-oriented microstructure.
- No more swung dashes – each compound or derivative, each headword that is repeated in a phrase or example sentence, is given in full.
- Each headword is given full lemmatization – no more nesting of compounds or derivatives.
- The headwords are printed in ‘Langenscheidt blue’ – phrasal verbs follow after the base-verb in a blue frame.
- In the German-English section, entries that changed considerably due to the new

German orthography are given in a blue frame.

- No more cryptic abbreviations for grammar, but clear, explicit meta-language or phrases and examples to show typical grammatical structures.

• The dictionary is tailored to meet the varying needs of the users depending on the individual context:

- English-German for decoding:

This part concentrates on what students might hear or read. Here they can find a large number of headwords with a lot of idiomatic contemporary vocabulary.

- German-English for encoding:

This part concentrates on what students wish to express in spoken or written English. Here they find a selective range of headwords for active use. For the first time, L2-phonetics are given in the L1-L2 section of a bilingual dictionary.

- usage notes:

A wealth of usage notes were especially designed to meet the needs of the German-speaking users.

- illustrations:

A new kind of contextualized, lively colour illustrations help to extend the learner’s vocabulary and offer scope for classroom work.

- Bearing in mind that there is more to language learning than just grammar and vocabulary, i. e. cultural and communicative competence, we introduced *Info-Fenster* [*info boxes*] with additional information on language phenomena, cultural or political topics, and other subjects of relevance to learners.

#### Conclusion

The feedback on the *Power Dictionary* has been overwhelming. In fact, soon after publication we received inquiries from other European dictionary publishers who showed an interest in producing English learner’s dictionaries for their languages in line with the *Power* concept.

Inevitably, we pursued the idea of establishing a *Power Family*, including a range of bilingual learner’s dictionaries for the main European languages. So, the second in this line was *Power Wörterbuch Französisch* (French), published in 1999, followed by *Power Wörterbuch Spanisch* (Spanish) in 2004 and *Power Wörterbuch Italienisch* (Italian) appearing this year. The English and French *Power* dictionaries underwent revisions in 2002 and 2003 respectively.

At the same time, some features of the *Power* concept were incorporated into revised editions of other Langenscheidt dictionaries: blue headwords, info boxes and other didactic features can be found



### Langenscheidt Power Dictionary Englisch Englisch-Deutsch Deutsch-Englisch

Konzeption: Vincent J.

Docherty

Projectleitung: Wolfgang  
Walther

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[www.langenscheidt.de](http://www.langenscheidt.de)

in the *Großes Schulwörterbuch* [*Concise School Dictionary*] as well as in the *Taschenwörterbuch* [*Standard Dictionary*] series. Even the complete revision of the *Muret-Sanders Großwörterbuch Deutsch-Englisch* [*Muret Sanders Comprehensive German-English Dictionary*] was infected by the “Power virus”.

However, we perfectly realize that the *Power* concept cannot be applied to all kinds of dictionaries. Tourists want, for example, a pocket dictionary with plenty of headwords and a good choice of travel-related vocabulary. Professional users, like translators, need a plethora of

special vocabulary, secretaries may want a dictionary with typical office-oriented phraseology, etc.

In the future, Langenscheidt will continue to offer a wide range of dictionaries in order to meet the requirements of as many users as possible. But with the *Power* concept we are convinced that we have achieved a major breakthrough in bilingual learners' lexicography.

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### moon

moon<sup>2</sup> ['mu:n] salopp den nackten Hintern vorzeigen

moon about oder around [ˌmu:n əˈbaʊt oder əˈraʊnd] mst. zu Hause: lustlos herumlungern

moonlight<sup>1</sup> ['mu:nlaɪt] Mondlicht, Mondschein

moonlight<sup>2</sup> ['mu:nlaɪt] umg. schwarzarbeiten, Ⓢ pfuschen

moonlighter ['mu:nlaɪtə] umg. Schwarzarbeiter(in), Ⓢ Pfuscher(in)

moonlit ['mu:nlaɪt] mondhell; moonlit night Mondnacht

moor [mu:ə] Landschaftsform: Hochmoor

moose [mu:s] Pl.: moose Häuscher in Nordamerika: Elch

mop<sup>1</sup> [mɒp] 1. zum Wischen: Mopp 2. auch mop of hair Mähne

mop<sup>2</sup> [mɒp] mopped, mopped wischen, abwischen

mop up [ˌmɒp ʌp] aufwischen

moped ['mɒpɪd] Moped

moral<sup>1</sup> ['mɒrəl] moralisch; moral obligation moralische Verpflichtung; moral

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noch etwas, noch etwas mehr; can I have a little more? kann ich etwas mehr haben?; what more do you want? was willst du denn noch?

moreover [məʊəvə] außerdem, überdies

morning ['mɔ:niŋ] 1. (= Tagesbeginn) Morgen; good morning! guten Morgen!; in the morning morgens, am Morgen; early in the morning frühmorgens, früh am Morgen; this morning heute Morgen; tomorrow morning morgen früh 2. vor 12 Uhr: Vormittag; in the morning vormittags, am Vormittag; this morning heute Vormittag; tomorrow morning morgen Vormittag

Morocco [mə'reɪkoʊ] Marokko

Moroccan<sup>1</sup> [mə'reɪkən] marokkanisch

Moroccan<sup>2</sup> [mə'reɪkən] Marokkaner(in)

morose [mə'reɪs] mürrisch

Morse code ['mɔ:s kəʊd] Morsealphabet

morsel ['mɔ:sl] 1. Bissen, Happen 2. über- mager Quälchen

mortal<sup>1</sup> ['mɔ:tl] 1. Mensch: sterblich 2. Ver- letzung usw.: tödlich (to für) 3. mortal fear Todesangst; mortal sin Todsünde; mortal enemy Todfeind

mortal<sup>2</sup> ['mɔ:tl] Sterbliche(r); we ordi- nary mortals humorvoll wir gewöhnli- chen Sterblichen

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### Komplott

comfortabel 1. Hotel, Wohnung: well-ap- pointed, nur hinter dem Subst.: with all (the) conveniences (BE auch mod cons)

2. (= luxuriös) luxurious [lʌg'zjuəriəs]

Komik humour ['bjʊəmə]

Komiker(in) comedian [kə'mi:diən], com- ic

komisch 1. funny (auch im Sinn von merk- würdig) 2. das Komische daran ist the funny thing (about it) is

Komitee committee [kə'mi:ti] (Δ Schrei- tung)

Komma 1. comma; hier fehlt ein Komma there's a comma missing here 2. drei Komma vier (3,4) three point four (3.4) (Δ mit Punkt geschrieben) 3. null Komma drei (0,3) (nought, AE O [əʊ]) point three (0.3) (Δ mit Punkt geschrie- ben; nought wird mündlich oft weggelas- tet)

Kommatahler punctuation mistake

Kommandeur(in) commander [kə'mɑ:n- dɔ]

kommandieren (= befehlen) command

Kommando 1. (= Befehl) command [kə'mɑ:nd], order 2. das Kommando ha- ben be\* in command (über of) 3. (= Ein- heit mit Sonderauftrag) commando [kə'mɑ:ndaɪ]

kommen 1. allg.: come\*; ich komme!

was! you'll never get anywhere if you go on like that! 19. hinter etwas kom- men find\* something out

Kommen: Sneakers sind wieder im Kommen sneakers are coming back into fashion

kommend 1. coming. (= zukünftig) auch future ['fju:tʃə]

2. Wendungen: kom- mende Woche next week; in den kom- menden Jahren in the years to come; die kommende Generation the rising genera- tion

Kommentar 1. (= Stellungnahme) com- ment ['kɒmənt] (zu on) 2. zu Fußballspiel im Fernsehen usw.: commentary ['kɒməntəri] 3. in Zeitung: opinion col- umn [Δ ə'pɪnɪən,kɒləm]

Kommissar(in) 1. Polizei: superintendent [ˌsʊpərɪn'tendənt], AE captain ['kæptən]

2. (= Bevollmächtigte, -er) commissioner

Kommode chest of drawers [ˌtʃest əv- 'drɔ:z], AE auch bureau ['bjʊərəʊ]

Kommune (= Gemeindef) community

Kommunikationsmittel: ein modernes Kommunikationsmittel a modern means of communication

Kommunion Sakrament: (Holy) Com- munion

Kommunismus communism [ˌkɒmjʊ- nɪzəm]